



CWS Statement to the House Judiciary Committee Pertaining to its [Hearing](#), “The Consequences of Criminal Aliens on U.S. Communities”

Church World Service (CWS) is a 77-year old humanitarian organization representing 37 Protestant, Anglican, and Orthodox communions, as well as resettlement offices and affiliates, home study and post release services, and asylum seeker case management services across the country. CWS decries the false conflation of immigrants and criminality and calls on Congress to recognize the tremendous contributions of immigrants, reject harmful and dehumanizing rhetoric, and turn towards solutions that will help newcomers participate, contribute, and thrive in their new communities.

Around the nation, CWS and our affiliates provide essential support to refugees, asylum seekers, unaccompanied children and other recently-arrived populations. The communities in which CWS works strongly support the arrival of immigrants, and are eager to welcome newcomers. In particular, for people of faith from across our nation’s diverse religious traditions, welcoming the sojourner is a vital spiritual practice. Faith communities around the country recognize that regardless of immigration status, every person is equally and inherently endowed with dignity and the right to thrive. They put this principle into practice by [actively investing](#) their time in efforts to [support](#) and [welcome](#) immigrants in our communities.

CWS is troubled by the false conflation of immigrants and criminal activity. Extensive [research](#) indicates that immigrants, including and particularly those who are [undocumented](#), are far less likely to engage in [criminal activity](#) and [other harmful actions](#) compared to native-born Americans. [Research](#) suggests that the [historic drop](#) in violent crime rates that began in the mid-1990s is correlated with a coinciding growth in the number of foreign-born people in the U.S., especially in cities that experienced large increases in their immigrant populations. The strength of [civic participation](#), [emphasis on family](#) and [economic vitality](#) that immigrants bring to our communities are a benefit to public safety.

When the U.S. commits to honoring our long history and tradition of welcoming newcomers, everyone stands to benefit. For centuries, immigrants have contributed to the richness and vibrancy of American culture by bringing new languages, stories, foods, and celebrations to our shores. Immigrants also [promote innovation](#), [boost economic vitality](#), and [open small businesses](#). Further, welcoming newcomers bolsters U.S. global leadership by demonstrating our values to the world.

Despite their tremendous contributions to our communities, many immigrants continue to face undue barriers to full participation in our economy and institutions that Congress must proactively address. Currently, asylum seekers endure long, unpredictable wait times before being legally allowed to earn an income to support themselves and their families. **CWS urges Congress to enact legislation that promotes economic stability and self-sufficiency by ending lengthy wait times for work authorization and establishing viable pathways to permanent status.**

Our nation’s diverse faith traditions compel us to love our neighbor, accompany the vulnerable, and welcome the sojourner. We are called by our sacred texts to approach one another with love – not fear – and to affirm the value and dignity of all, including immigrants and asylum seekers. **CWS urges Congress to reject rhetoric that falsely equates immigration and crime, and instead pass policies that promote and uphold the United States’ longstanding legacy of welcome.**